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INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1017
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 8008
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 6181
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4496
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2181
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4459
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3560
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8614
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 6059
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0721
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2877
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000706

SENSITIVE
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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/21/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: LTTE DECLARES UNILATERAL CEASEFIRE FOR
SAARC SUMMIT

REF: COLOMBO 660

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The LTTE announced that it will observe a unilateral ceasefire during the SAARC summit from July 26 to August 4, but warned that it would continue to respond to any government offensives with defensive actions. The Sri Lankan government has reacted warily to the ceasefire declaration and does not plan to reciprocate at a time when it feels it is gaining the upper hand militarily. Officials repeated the GSL's recent position that it would not enter into peace talks until the LTTE commits to disarming. End summary.

¶2. (U) The LTTE announced on July 21 that it will observe a unilateral ceasefire during the SAARC summit from July 26 to August 4, but peace talks remain "impossible" according to P. Nadesan, the rebels' political chief. While the statement extended good wishes for the success of the summit, it warned that if the Sri Lankan Army carried out any offensives the LTTE would "be forced to take defensive actions."

¶3. (U) The government reacted warily to the LTTE's declaration of a ceasefire, with Defense spokesperson Keheliya Rambukwella saying the government would not fall into this LTTE "trap." Sri Lanka Peace Secretariat head Rajiva Wijesinha noted that the LTTE has previously used ceasefires to recoup its strength. Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama stated that the government "is not bound to" the LTTE's ceasefire and noted that the matter was not under discussion in Parliament.

¶4. (U) The state-owned Sinhala newspaper Dinamina quoted Defense Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa as saying that the LTTE had suffered major setbacks recently. The government therefore had no motivation to enter into a ceasefire at present, according to the article. While the government has stated in the past that it would be willing to restart peace talks if the rebels ceased their attacks, Rajapaksa stressed that this could not occur until the LTTE lays down all arms and agrees to a political process defined by the government (ref A).

15. (U) LTTE political wing head Nadesan called the condition of disarmament "naive" and "impractical," adding that he did not consider the military's latest victories in Vidathalthivu and Illupakadavai to be significant threats to the LTTE's struggle. "We have repeatedly demonstrated our ability to convert the Sri Lankan government offensives into our favor," he told press yesterday. Nadesan reiterated the LTTE's invitation to the Norwegian facilitators to come to Kilinochchi for further discussions (ref A).

16. (SBU) The Norwegian Charge told Ambassador that Norway had indeed received the LTTE's declaration of a unilateral ceasefire and had conveyed the information to the government of Sri Lanka. However, she said that the Norwegian government had not yet reached a decision about issuing a public statement welcoming the ceasefire.

17. (C) Foreign Secretary Palitha Kohona told Ambassador late on July 22 that the government had learned not to accept the LTTE's moves at face value. During numerous previous ceasefires, the LTTE had always used the opportunity to regroup and rearm, he said. Ambassador pointed out that the President's statement that the LTTE must disarm before commencing talks was a non-starter; the IRA and other groups were not asked to do so, and the insurgent group would be giving away its only bargaining chip. Kohona responded that the GSL believes the LTTE had to commit to a "process of demobilization" before any new talks could take place.

18. (C) COMMENT: Defense Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa's

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statement the government would not join the LTTE in observing a temporary ceasefire during the SAARC summit appears at least superficially inconsistent with previous GSL positions that the purpose of its offensive was to weaken the LTTE and force it into talks. While we consider any ceasefire declaration a welcome development and hope that the LTTE will indeed refrain from carrying out terrorist attacks during the summit, we doubt that the LTTE's announcement will create any early movement toward a negotiated settlement. Embassy plans for now to refrain from issuing a public statement on the LTTE move in order to avoid getting out in front of the Norwegian mediators.

BLAKE